

Testimony in Support of HB-6355 An Act Concerning Risk Protection Orders

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking members Kissel and Fishbein and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am from Greenwich CT and a supporter of CT Against Gun Violence.

My husband's uncle took his life with a handgun, in an act of depression. Had this law been in effect, perhaps the removal of his gun, and assurance that he received treatment, would have saved his life.

Connecticut was the first state in the nation to pass an Extreme Risk Protection Order law, in 1999. It offers a means of last resort, with due process protections, to temporarily remove firearms from individuals judged to be at risk of imminent harm to themselves or others. It has been shown to prevent firearm suicide and stop mass shootings. It is time to strengthen the law so that it works harder to prevent gun violence. In particular, when the protection order expires, it should be a requirement that the subject is no longer at risk of violence before the firearms are returned. That is not the case now.

Because there are often warning signs preceding violent or suicidal behavior this last-resort measure with due process protections is an effective tool for reducing gun violence. Because firearm suicide accounts for up to two-thirds of gun deaths and is the second leading cause of suicide in Connecticut, there is an urgent need to strengthen our ERPO law to help it save more lives.

Risk protection laws are demonstrated to reduce firearm suicide. A Duke/Yale/UCONN study reported that for every 10-20 risk protection orders issued under Connecticut's ERPO law, one suicide is prevented. Another study reported that Indiana's extreme risk laws reduced firearm suicide rates 7.5%.

I ask that you favorably report HB-6355 out of committee so that the General Assembly can vote to strengthen our Extreme Risk Protection law so that it works harder to prevent firearm suicide and homicide. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Patricia Caffray
Greenwich, CT